



## *Emergency Programs* DIVISION

### **Exotic Newcastle Disease in Caged (Exotic) Birds Information for Bird Owners January 2003**

**Introduction:** Caged birds are one of the most popular pets kept by young and old alike in the United States (US). Like other animals, birds are susceptible to infections, especially when mixed with other birds that have infections. Exotic Newcastle Disease, a highly contagious viral disease of birds, is currently threatening California's bird industry. It often causes high mortality (up to 90%) in chickens, but all birds are susceptible. Caged birds legally entering the US are quarantined and tested by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to ensure they are free of Exotic Newcastle Disease, but illegally smuggled birds may carry infection. An Exotic Newcastle Disease outbreak in caged birds in Florida in 1980 resulted in the death of approximately 8,000 birds and the depopulation of 30,307 birds in 23 states. It cost the USDA \$1,166,253. Exotic Newcastle Disease is a serious threat to the caged bird industry.

**Signs** of disease are highly variable and non-specific in caged birds. One of the classical signs of Exotic Newcastle Disease is tremors and involuntary shaking of head and body when the bird tries to move. Other signs may include anorexia, depression, diarrhea, paralysis, twisted neck, respiratory difficulty, eye discharge, weight loss, etc. Similar signs may be seen with other bird diseases. Laboratory testing is necessary to confirm a diagnosis of Exotic Newcastle Disease.

**Incubation** varies from two to 17 days depending on the species of the bird, management factors, concurrent infections, etc. Cockatiels, budgies, amazons, and cockatoos are highly susceptible to the disease. Other species such as Lorys, macaws, canaries, finches, Mynahs, and African greys may not show signs but may act as carriers.

**Lesions** range from none to hemorrhages in the digestive and respiratory tracts, and plaques in the pharynx and glottis. Other lesions may include hepatosplenomegaly and ascites.

**Diagnosis** can be made in live birds by virus isolation from feces, cloacal and tracheal swabs. Lung, intestine, brain, liver and spleen are suitable organs for virus isolation. Serology can be used for screening.

**Treatment and Control:** There is no treatment for Exotic Newcastle Disease. Vaccination strategies should be discussed with your veterinarian. Use biosecurity measures to prevent diseases from affecting your birds. For more information on biosecurity, visit our web site at:  
**<http://www.ncagr.com/oep/default.html>**

**What you can do:** If you observe unusual disease in your birds, notify the Rollins Diagnostic Laboratory at **919 733-3986** or submit birds to one of the state diagnostic laboratories located in:

- Arden: 828 684-8188
- Elkin: 336 526-2499
- Monroe: 704 289-6448
- Robbins: 910 948-2241
- Rose Hill: 910 289-2635

Exotic Newcastle disease is a federal reportable disease. Any person who suspects this disease exists should immediately report the disease to the State Veterinarian by calling the Rollins Diagnostic Laboratory **919 733-3986**

For more information on Exotic Newcastle Disease visit our web site at  
**[www.ncagr.com/oep/default.html](http://www.ncagr.com/oep/default.html)**